

**Meeting Date:** May 22, 2008

**Agenda Item No. 15**

**Agenda Item:** Bighorn Sheep Update

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepared by:** Jim Unsworth

**Background:**

On 14 February 2008, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission endorsed an Interim Strategy for Managing Separation between Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep in Idaho (Interim Strategy). The Interim Strategy was developed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), in consultation with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), and is intended as a first step toward the development of a long-term strategy for addressing the conflict arising from the interaction of bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) and domestic sheep. It provides guidance for the development of management strategies at the allotment level that are tailored to the conservation value of each wild sheep population. A primary goal of the Interim Strategy is to provide spatial and temporal separation between core bighorn sheep populations and domestic sheep, as appropriate. In response to recent legal challenges the USFS has denied the use of some domestic sheep allotments. As an interim step, Department staff has worked with woolgrowers, ISDA, BLM, and USFS to develop allotment level plans that provide BMP's and response plans to reduce the risk of contact between domestic and wild sheep. The Department has begun work on a Bighorn Sheep Species Management Plan.

**Policy issues:**

Ensuring separation between domestic and bighorn sheep on common range is very difficult. Cooperative plans reduce the risk of interaction; however, spatial separation at a level that limits the potential of disease to acceptable levels may require prioritizing range use for domestic or bighorn sheep. The issue is further complicated by private lands adjacent to public lands and the larger debate over public lands grazing.

**Public Involvement Process:**

On October 12, 2007, Governor Otter asked the Directors of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture ("ISDA") and Idaho Department of Fish and Game ("IDFG") to assemble a working group to develop a unified state policy addressing issues related to the interaction of domestic sheep and bighorn sheep in Idaho. The working group helped in the development of the Interim Strategy. It is proposed that the working group continue with a collaborative effort to address domestic/wild sheep issues and their input be used to develop this section of the Department's bighorn sheep management plan. The public will also be involved in the species planning process.

**Justification:**

Information only.

**Action Requested:**

Information only.

**Staff Recommendations:**

Information only.